

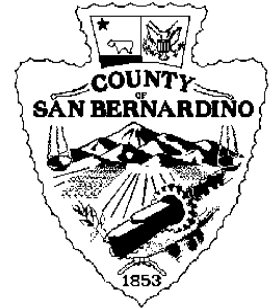
# NEWS

## *From Supervisor Bill Postmus*

First District, San Bernardino County

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For information, contact  
Brad Mitzelfelt (909) 387-4830

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### **SUPERVISORS ADD MORE FIREFIGHTERS TO HAZARD AREAS**

SAN BERNARDINO – Mountain communities served by the San Bernardino County Fire Department will soon see more firefighters at their fire stations, thanks to a Supplemental Fire Department Staffing Plan approved Tuesday by the Board of Supervisors.

The \$300,000 plan will provide increased fire suppression capability in the form of extra firefighters to the areas most threatened by unprecedented extreme fire-hazard conditions, including the mountain communities of Wrightwood, Angelus Oaks, Forest Falls, and Fawnskin, as well as Devore, Lytle Creek and Mentone.

The additional dollars, from the County's General Fund Contingencies budget, are intended to provide additional fire protection for a six-month period, including the worst months of this year's fire season, said First District Supervisor Bill Postmus, who represents Wrightwood. The plan provides one additional firefighter position to Wrightwood's current three-man configuration, he said.

"In addition to providing greater initial response capability, the additional personnel will also provide a benefit to cooperating mountain, desert, and valley fire agencies during mutual-aid responses," Postmus added.

The funds will provide for additional "paid-call" (part-time) firefighters that are needed due to a fire season that has been exacerbated by ongoing drought and bark beetle-related tree mortality in the local mountains, as well as hot weather. The purpose of the additional staffing is to ensure the county's fire stations are adequately staffed for initial callouts of reported fires.

"This capability will help ensure that any initial fires can be forcefully addressed by responding fire crews," said County Assistant Fire Chief Dan Wurl.

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## MORE FIREFIGHTERS

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Postmus said the supplemental plan is a “stop-gap” measure aimed at getting the County’s unincorporated areas through the year without a disastrous fire. Concurrently, the Board of Supervisors is working with County analysts and consultants to develop structural and fiscal reforms of the County Fire system to provide better fire protection to areas that need it. The process will be open to public input in the coming months, Postmus said.

Following is a brief description of current staffing and the approved Supplemental Plan staffing:

The Wrightwood fire station has a staff of three: two assigned to the ambulance and a captain assigned to the fire engine. This current configuration leaves the captain by himself while the ambulance is on calls, making it difficult to respond quickly to suppress a rapidly growing fire in its initial stages. Due to extreme fire conditions exacerbated by a water-shortage emergency, the Supplemental Staffing Plan provides an extra-help firefighter on a 24-hour shift basis assigned to the fire engine at a cost of \$50,000.

Angelus Oaks and Forest Falls each have a station staffed by paid-call volunteers, many of who work off the mountain, with support from staffed stations in Mentone, Redlands, Yucaipa, and Fawnskin. Response times of up to 25 minutes leave the area vulnerable to a fast-spreading fire. The supplemental staffing provides three extra-help paid call firefighters at each fire station working the same 10-hour period when the paid-call volunteers are at work at a cost of \$100,000.

Mentone and Fawnskin each have a fire captain and an extra-help firefighter. Because these stations help support the stations at Angeles Oaks and Forest Falls, the supplemental staffing plan provides one additional extra-help firefighter on a 24-hour shift basis to each station at a cost of \$80,000.